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Jean Rivard

Joseph Edward Lanouette

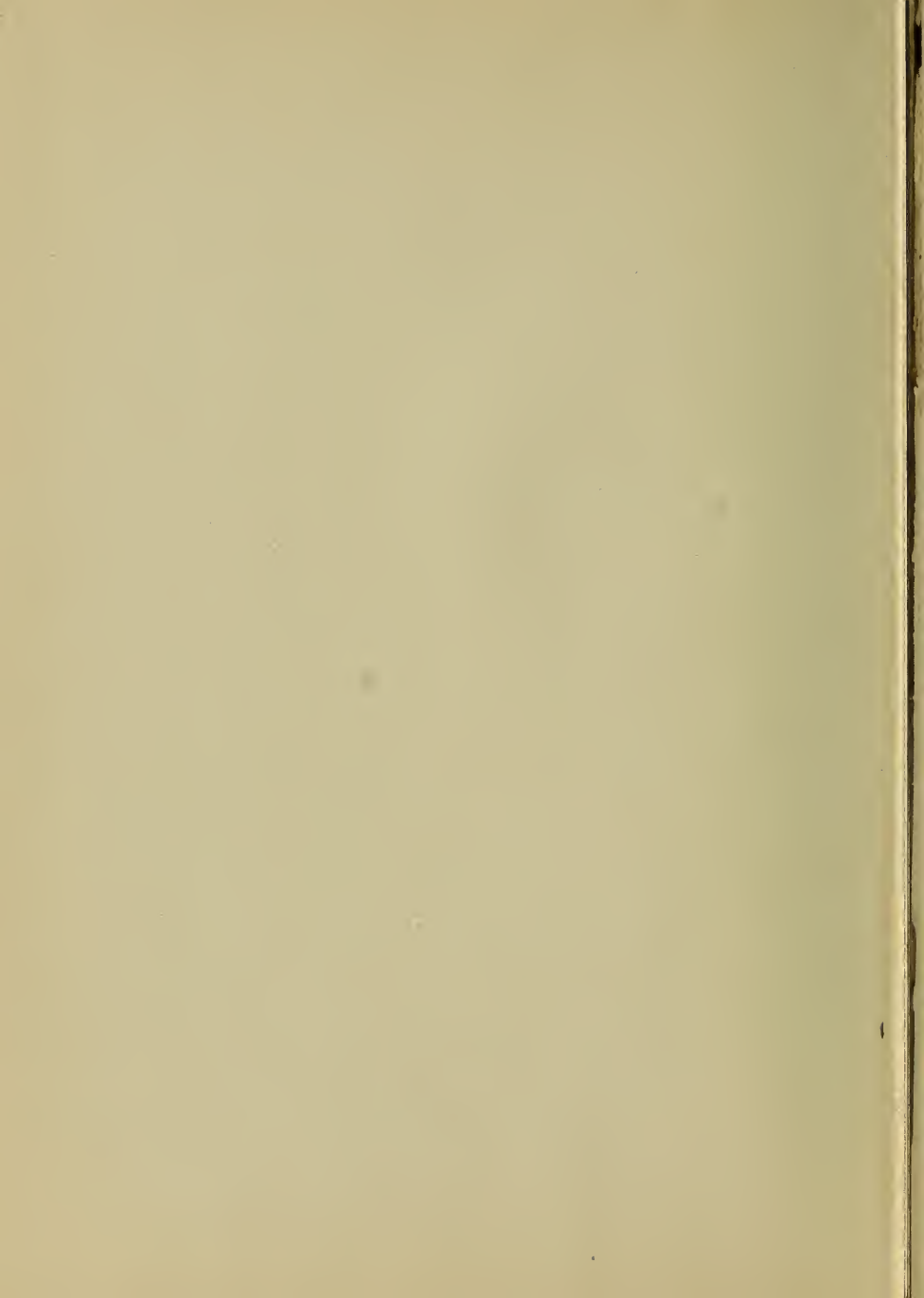


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JEAN RIVARD

BY
JOSEPH EDWARD LANOUE



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JEAN RIVARD

DEDICATION

*To all fathers whose sons served in the world's greatest
war*

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JEAN RIVARD

PART ONE

The Three

JEAN RIVARD

Listen now to this tale
You who think to know all,
And a legend of old
It perhaps may recall.
But this simply tells
Of a father's great love
Which caused him to turn
From his Maker above,
And while none can vouch
For its strict verity,
I now tell you the tale
As was once told to me.

Jean Rivard was his name, a most plain simple man,
(Who unknown might have died ere the world war began.)
With his four-footed friends, who his lonely life cheered,
In the newly cleared land had a small cottage reared.
Which in time, to Jean long, did the good fairies bless,
Who sent to Jean's cottage the light-hearted Jess,
The hard toil became play, Jean did care to wind fling,
Counted not upon what the next morrow might bring.

Contrasting were they, these two, so well mated,
Only Heaven could have such a marriage created,
Ever kissing her neck was the light waving gold,

The laughing blue eyes, and red lips never cold,
A well-rounded form, a hand for work ready,
The foot that oftimes was to music unsteady,
All in all, such as one has perhaps seldom seen,
Was the Jess that the fairies had sent to her Jean.

In the field around Jean are the bobolinks singing,
But sweeter by far are the summer winds bringing
The ne'er delayed call to the meal well prepared,
Served daintily by her who his cottage now shared;
Then would Jean rest awhile, of work never thinking,
But one day of all days sat till sun was low sinking,
As with her on his knee did his dear one enfold,
With her head on his breast, was the great secret told.

Jean's bit-champing friend and the cud-chewing beast
Were treated one day to a most royal feast,
The lean wistful-eyed dogs, who by chance there did stray,
By the scraps and the bones well remembered this day.
The footsore and weary were not turned from the door,
All welcome were they to partake of his store.
Why does Jean's simple heart with such gladness expand,
As he scatters his hoard with a prodigal hand?
Yesternight, a large bird, as o'er the house flying,
Had dropped a small parcel near where Jess was lying.

But like a rare orchid that is cherished with care
Lest its petals be shorn by the cold wintry air,
Even so came to be, when hour after hour,
Jess and her Jean watched the weak fragile flower,

For days there were many when they ate not nor slept
As their ne'er ceasing vigils they untiringly kept,
Jean now prayed to his God as he'd not prayed before
That the Spectre of Death might be kept from his door.

Though the night endless seems, comes the bright dawn
at last,
And the sun shines again, for the crisis is passed,
As the thin wasted form 'gainst her bosom did rest,
By the dear mother's hand again fondly caressed,
No queen silken-clad was more happy than she,
Who, cotton-gowned, crooned a low lullaby,
The overful heart sent glad tears to her eye,
For her arm held that which a queen's gold could not buy.

When as day followed day, and week after week,
The pink overspread the once thin pallid cheek,
The little limp arm had become plump and round,
Where his mother, perchance, some new dimple found,
Can by no facile pen be words written, that could
Describe the pure joy of her young motherhood,
As his small baby hands wandered over her face,
And his curly head nestled in its love-hallowed place.

Swiftly sped on the years, each day something new,
As their once feeble babe to a sturdy lad grew,
Whom Jean sometimes chided, whom she oft did caress,
Just a natural three, Jean, Phillip, and Jess.
In the two minds mature was their childhood renewed,

By the pranks of their boy was their own past reviewed,
Cared they not, Jess and Jean, for the big world outside,
Cared they only for Phillip and their own fireside.

In the cottage was one, of herself never sparing,
In the field was the other, strong armed, burden-bearing,
At night was there counted what had earned in the day,
All above present needs for their boy placed away.
A few pennies each day to the little store add,
Which would help pay the schooling of Phillip, their lad.
In the end, for this toil would they be well requited,
Ever thinking of one, in which both were united.

On the vine covered porch are young tendrils clinging
From the warm sun-kissed earth are the violets springing,
In apple tree blossoms is the oriole swinging,
Again is the robin her summer nest stringing,
Around the white cottage are bobolinks singing,
But no tokens of joy are these now to Jean bringing.

The light-hearted Jess one day appeared sad,
For the first time neglected her six year old lad,
The hand ever willing, for work was not ready,
The small restless foot was that morning unsteady,
The light waving gold was fast losing its sheen,
To the laughing blue eyes many things were unseen,
The once warm cherry lips were now cold and pale,
Their Jess had been stricken, and no skill would avail.
Could she but have spoken, the fear would have been,
Who would care now for laddie and her hard working Jean.

Never far from her touch were there two always staying,
One weeping, not knowing; one knowing, and praying,
Little Phillip, her laddie, the other, her Jean,
Also One who close hovered, presence felt but unseen.
When to her came the Summons she left those by her side,
With Him away drifted on the slow ebbing tide,
His wings spread for sails, guides her frail bark to lee
Of the rocks, barring entrance, to Eternity's Sea.

In the cottage now silent,
Are hearts with grief torn,
The spirit departed
At the coming of morn.
The soft golden sunbeams
As they reached the white bed,
Wreathed a halo celestial
Around the dear head.
Her laddie, not knowing,
On the coverlet weeping
Was calling in vain
The wearied one sleeping.
Jean's mind could not fathom
Why she should be taken,
In what long he'd believed
His faith was now shaken.
When to Him, Jean had prayed
Might be spared them the rod,
That his prayer had not heard
COULD THERE BE NO JUST GOD!

End of Part One

JEAN RIVARD

PART TWO

The Two

JEAN RIVARD

In the field around Jean is a little boy playing,
Here and there, everywhere, the bare feet are straying
As a butterfly chased, or a speckled egg found,
Or ran the fat woodchuck to his hole in the ground.
From blue-bell to daisy like a humming bird flits,
Then returns to Jean tired, and on plow handle sits
As Jean told a story, in this way diverting
The mind that was always to one thing reverting.

It was not every day that these two so enjoyed,
There were five in the week when the lad was employed
In holding the pen till his fingers were aching,
As pot hooks and curves and circles were making.
The well-pictured primer its contents perusing,
The old spelling book with words so confusing
Seemed to him like time wasted, as he thought of the pool
By the bushes well shaded, not far from the school,
Where with bent pin and fly was sometimes a fish caught,
Sharing there with his lassie, the lunch he had brought.

Of the once open wound in the scar there's a trace
Which Time, the Great Healer, cannot wholly efface.
Those that do never heal
Can of these many be,
Does the heart well conceal

What the eye cannot see.
With the pain never absent
Then in anguish we're turning
To those that are present
Who can best still the yearning
For some small compassion that can make the heart glad
Was it so with these two, Jean and Phillip, his lad.

Like the strong rugged oak, whose far-reaching arm
Shields the sapling beneath from unforeseen harm,
Lest the merciless gale in blind furious wrath
Uproot with a vengeance all that dared block its path,
So Phillip, the sapling, by the boughs overspread,
Felt no touch of the blast as it reared its young head.
And offspring and parent, sometimes bent by the wind,
Soon rebound from each blow with their branches entwined.

Although to the world, Jean was silent and stern,
When he played with his lad, did the years backward turn.
For the time would regret
That he now was a man,
Trying well to forget
As he thought of some plan
How could best keep away
From the fast growing mind
What he looked for each day
And would never-more find,
Two comrades were they, in the truest sense known,
The Oak's height had stopped, but the Sapling had grown.

At the window would Jean, in the morn often stand
To return the goodbye of his lad's waving hand,
As he made the last turn ere he passed from his view,
While his school bag he swung, filled with books not a few.
For the studious lad in his work did excel,
Not alone in what carried, but in all things as well.
In their rough games and sports a bold leader was he,
With the fists or the foils none could claim mastery.

Occurred then which none could the least understand,
A panic disastrous swept over the land;
Few there were if any
 But received a great fall,
And Jean, like the many
 Unaware, lost his all.
Although to ground felled
 But a moment he lies,
By his Phillip's hand held
 Does with new strength arise.
Wrought again, hard and long, though most blunt was
 the tool,
It was all for his lad who continued at school.

Phillip finished his course with such merit that he
A scholarship won for the great 'Varsity.
None prouder were there on the day that he told
His father he now was a student enrolled
In a great seat of learning, through whose portals had
 passed
Men of world-wide renown, whose fame still would last

To the end of all time, and the star-blazoned scroll,
Which told of their deeds, was to Phillip his goal.

Now his lad had attained

To what rightly belonged,
To himself, Jean complained

Had his own life been wronged.

Once the time was when Jean had ambition to learn,
But the mouths needed more than the small hands could
earn.

Handicapped in all ways

But one path could he tread,
Since his young boyhood days
He no school book had read.

But his shoulders were broad, his step sure though slow,
What had been in Jean crushed, would his lad never know.

Between Jean and his Jess had been nothing unshared,
But to Phillip, his lad, there was never unbared
The every day grind which he had to forefend
And the burden that oft caused his shoulders to bend
As he toiled with his might

Without one thought of rest,
From morn until night

By one idea obsessed
That the hard stony path, which he travelled alone,
Would be, to his Phillip, forever unknown.

The seeds of his thrift, so well had these sown,
That small tarnished coins had to gold eagles grown.

A mere pittance, 'tis true,
Was this well-hoarded gain,
What it cost to obtain
There were none better knew.
For his Phillip had saved,
There would soon come the day
When on roads roughly paved
Would be wending his way.
As Jean the pile counted was embittered by thought,
That his long years of toil had this small reward brought.

Jean was well past his prime, and the unending care
Had whitened the locks of his once raven hair,
The tall stalwart form, which for years had defied
All buffets and blows, from the world could not hide
The slow ravage of Time, for Jean in his zeal
Had tended the mast as well as the wheel;
He alone had accomplished the task meant for two,
From Life had he borrowed; It demanded its due.

By Phillip's years Jean should have much younger been,
But from Jean was withheld what is given most men.
Upon him had depended the care of those smaller,
On his shoulders had fallen the whip of one taller.
Well remembered by Jean was the oft emptied bottle,
A Demon releasing that no hand could throttle,
When at last was no more what had long grieved his
mother,
Jean had shed not a tear as he looked at the other.

Into Jean's mirthless life had by accident entered
What around long thereafter was everything centered.
But his arm could not do that for which heart was longing,
For this would have been the weaker one's wronging.
Those that do birds desire must for them get a cage,
At the rate Jean was saving, it would soon be an age.
When of her, Jean had asked, "Will you wait for me,
Jess?"

Was there to him answered the little word "Yes."
How much can sometimes a simple word tell,
Had for each other waited, and they both waited well.

Has the world rolled around with its flowers and its snow,
Much too fast for the Oak, for the Sapling, too slow.
For the strong knotted branch which had served as a
shield

To the fast growing Slip now no longer appealed,
To the sturdy young Oak pushing upward its way
Impelled by a force that no power can stay.
With their boughs interlocked, to an equal height grown,
There are TWO now where once stood the Old Oak alone.

But the Old Oak is stiff, to the blast cannot bend,
For the life-giving sap now does slowly ascend,
The brittle limbs break from the trunk roughly scarred,
And its bold symmetry is forever now marred.
But the Young Oak, the Son, as it bends to the storm
In its young virile strength, laughs the tempest to scorn,
It welcomes the blow

As with head high and free,
It sways to and fro
In a wild ecstasy.

Now the end was achieved,
Jean was more than content
That the close of his life
Would be happily spent
With the one that was left,
As to Phillip he turned
For the solace and cheer
Had unselfishly earned.
For his once brawny arm
Could not as before wield
The axe or the hoe
Or the scythe in the field,
But his own little garden,
Where he spent many hours,
Was more than replete
With its fruit and its flowers.

End of Part Two

JEAN RIVARD

PART THREE

Phillip, the Scholar and Soldier

JEAN RIVARD

Of the courses at college there was one that appealed
Most strongly to Phillip, as he looked o'er the field
Where lads were assembling for the afternoon drill,
Little thinking they soon would depleted ranks fill.
While in years they were boys, yet each felt like a man,
As they marched, then deployed, now in skirmishes ran.
In the "esprit de corps" they all equally shared,
If war came, none could say they were found unprepared.

It was two years or more since the bullet well aimed
Had startled the world, now by fury inflamed,
The great war then begun

Which now seemed ne'er would cease,
Had a menace become

To all nations at peace.
None could say who the next would thereby be involved,
'Twas for this Phillip joined, for that day had resolved
He would work hard and long, while the time still re-
mained,
And the bars win, before his degree he'd obtained.

That night, well considered were the words he did say
To his father, lest he should his own thoughts betray.
That of which was no doubt, from his father withheld,
Time enough there would be when events so compelled.

His one and sole object, to Jean he explained,
Was that as a graduate he would be retained
By his own Alma Mater, for every large college
Was calling for those with military knowledge.

As Phillip, war-fevered, to his studies applied,
He thought of the sword that would hang by his side.
The books and the drills were by now well aligned,
In the lad was the scholar and soldier combined.
On the sleeve of his coat he had awkwardly sewn
That which to the soldier is the first stepping-stone,
They were Corporal's stripes, but the General's star
Now seemed to gleam faintly from a distance afar.

One morning, the Scholar was from college dismissed,
That noon, as an Officer, his dear father kissed.
The chevrons, which once he so proudly had worn,
That day from his coat had been hastily torn.
As a fitting reward to the painstaking soldier
His insignia had moved from the sleeve to the shoulder.
Phillip thought of the bars, as how brightly they shone,
Also thought of his father, who would soon be alone,
But his country had called, none could now change his
mind,
Was fully commissioned, and to duty assigned.

As of this Phillip told, Jean was prone to believing
That for months had the lad been his father deceiving,
But that this could so be, soon dismissed with a sigh
As years, resurrected, in review passing by,

Showed the school-going lad, then his brief college life,
The Great War that had drawn the whole world into strife,
Of what could well happen, Jean was filled with a dread,
As there loomed up before him the long years ahead.

But one day now remained, Jean appeared quite deranged,
Would have turned back the clock, or the calendar
changed,

Like the Joshua of old who commanded the sun
To stop in its course till the battle was won.

Wished the steamer near due

Might somewhere be detained,
That, thereby, could a few

Hours more be obtained.

There was that in his look, in the touch of his hand,
Which Phillip, his lad, did now well understand.

There were so many words could be left to the last,
But that time never came as the day quickly passed,
To the thought ever present

Jean never referred,
And the subject unpleasant

Once again was deferred.

But Time is no laggard, and it flies with swift wings,
Caring naught for the woe or the pleasure it brings.
To speak first both waited, when too soon the end came,
Their tongues remained silent, but their thoughts were the
same.

On the morn of the day
That his Phillip would leave,
Except those who have sons,
There are none will believe
That the Jean who now greeted
His lad with a smile,
The last night in his yard
Had walked many a mile.
All the words left unspoken
Ere the goodbyes were said,
Were now told in the grasp
Where were volumes unread.
When the coaches rolled out
With the troops well entrained,
Jean's heart was left empty,
The shell only remained.

End of Part Three

JEAN RIVARD

PART FOUR

Jean and the "Stranger"

JEAN RIVARD

At the station were many near Jean
Who did love for their country profess,
And on all such occasions are seen
Where they can by their presence impress.
Who now cheered the brave lads on their way
To a country with perils unknown,
Short time it would be until they
"Over there" the Red Tyrant dethrone.
Of those who were there loudly shouting
"By this only could democracy live,"
Were many of whom Jean was doubting,
If for war any sons they could give.

It could not have been Jean the next day
Who around the house aimlessly walked,
There was no loving hand there to stay
The Ghost that now silently stalked.
Who heard not the loud scratch at the door,
Nor the little tap-tap 'gainst the pane,
For the first, there will bones be no more,
For the others, no handful of grain.
It was not the few words Jean had spoken,
But it was the few words left unsaid,
That brought on a fitful sleep broken,
Which caused him to toss on his bed.

Of his lad was reminded each day
By the foils and mask hung on the wall,
On a shelf in the closet there lay
Skates, racquet, a golf stick and ball.
In the attic was carefully laid
Odds and ends that are dear to all boys,
Where on rainy days Phillip had played
Quite content with his crude home-made toys.
Hanging down from the cob-webbed beam
Whittled out from a tough hickory board
By him started, but finished by Jean,
Were a wonderful gun and a sword.

Jean cares little what neighbors may say,
Though the yard is with weeds overgrown,
In the rat-possessed barn, rusting lay
All the tools which the garden had known,
By the fence with its hinge-creaking gate,
Through which seldom does anyone pass,
For red apples they dare not to wait
As to school goes the lad with his lass.
With a fear they now quicken their pace,
Though neither can tell the cause why,
The something that's strange 'bout the place
Cannot hide from a child's curious eye.

To follow his lad, Jean had tried,
Did not know he was old until then,
From all those to whom he applied
Was answered, "We want younger men."

The war, never ceasing,
And each day increasing,
No old life was leasing.

Day by day in the papers appeared
Names that made the fond waiting hearts sad,
In each one that Jean opened he feared
Would be printed the name of his lad.
Of the next day not knowing
Whose name would be showing
In the list ever growing.

The November sun was then setting,
Soon he would the old student lamp light,
This hour of all, not forgetting
Where the two oft had sat there at night,
Well in front of the slow burning logs,
All that could the small fire-place hold,
There upheld by two mute patient dogs,
Which once shone with the color of gold;
Days ago had reflected like glass,
Now corroded and black, they portray
That impartial does Time nothing pass,
What is touched by his hand, will decay.

Now different to Jean were the flames,
Ever-changing, they cast on the wall
The long wavering lines of two names
Which to Jean all the past now recall.
It was first of his young charming bride

That the flickering shadows now spelled,
Then another one stood by her side
Whom her arms had once tenderly held.
He now thought of the time when were three,
When the united three were as one,
Knew not then that a day he would be
There alone left, without wife or son.

The old books, long unopened, unread,
Which he oft had with Phillip discussed,
Only Fate could have been that now led
Jean to where they stood covered with dust.
Strange to say that the first his hand crossed,
And the one for which Jean did not look,
Should contain the queer story of Faust,
Of them all, Phillip's favorite book.
He now read once again this quaint lore
As he sat by the fire, then he
Let it slip from his hand to the floor,—
He was lost in a deep reverie.

Then as Jean in the fire-place gazed
Were his thoughts in a new channel led,
Buried hopes in his heart had been raised
By the book which had long been unread.
As its full meaning grasped, it was clear
It could happen again, if 'twere true,
But to ask the Unknown to appear,
Was something that Jean feared to do.

Of his future, Jean was not sure,
His faith long ago had been shaken,
The day when his lad tried the pure
Dear heart from her sleep to awaken.
Jean then had most fervently prayed,
But his frantic appeals were unheeded,
Why had He not the parting delayed
Until Jean had his dear Jess preceded?
It now seemed it were but yesterday
Since his heart had been stabbed to the core,
The one who could this pain best allay
Might absent remain evermore.

Jean unseen had that day overheard
What his neighbors regarded as plain,
From his actions they well had inferred
That he soon would be going insane.
If what neighbors had said should be true,
This suspense not for long would endure,
There was one thing he quickly would do,
On earth there would soon be one fewer.
Why should he for an hour delay
In putting an end to his sorrow,
Although had been spared him this day,
There still was the ever tomorrow.

From his chair near the small fire-place,
With a face grim and stern, Jean arose,
Phillip's home he would never disgrace
When his hand brought his last long repose.

Abstracted, he picked from the floor
The old finger-marked copy of Faust;
Then he heard a loud rap at the door,
To the desk was the book quickly tossed.

Jean was startled almost to a fright
When had come unexpected the knock,
With a trembling hand did the lamp light,
But the door he could hardly unlock.
Before Jean stood one faultlessly dressed,
With a face that bespoke quick decision,
Had the confident air, self-possessed
Of one who well knew his position.
With a bow, asked in tones most polite
What Jean felt he could not well refuse,
If he there could a short letter write,
For this kindness would Jean nothing lose.

For this Jean was quite unprepared,
As to what best to do, hesitated,
For a second or so blankly stared
At the one who his answer awaited.
With some doubt as to if he was right,
Slowly Jean drew the door open wide,
To come into his house did invite
The one who stood waiting outside.
As he entered, Jean regretted he had
A few things in the cottage neglected,
Was not sure whether sorry or glad
Chance there had the stranger directed.

Unconcerned as though Jean was not there,
The stranger moved forward the light
To the desk, where he now placed a chair,
As though soon would his short letter write.
Neither paper nor parchment was that
Which he then from his breast pocket drew
And unrolled, which at once he laid flat
Near the book, of whose contents he knew.
No attention paid he to the Faust
Which Jean's nervous hand had held last,
With a look, that to Jean was not lost,
Sat down where he wrote long and fast.

With his queer looking pen, long and keen,
Was no fluid of any kind used,
Like some metal the sheet seemed to Jean
That had been by a strange process fused
In the cottage no sound was there heard
But the scratch of the fast moving pen,
Since he came in had been not a word
Exchanged there between the two men.
Jean wished, as he looked at the Stranger,
That he had his first impulse obeyed,
He felt there was lurking some danger,
Unseen, of which now was afraid.

But the Stranger had finished at last,
With a movement abrupt turned to Jean,
To whom seemed that a long night had passed
Since he had at the desk writing been.

From his eyes black as jet came a glow
Which strongly impressed Jean with fear,
But that Jean should his purpose not know,
Softly spoke, as his chair he drew near.
That he must a strong argument make
Lest his plans should be soon overthrown,
From Jean's eyes his strange orbs did not take
As his errand to him he made known.

"To your cottage I came unexpected,
"My service had not been requested,
"I came as a book had suggested.

"Ever willing am I to aid those in despair,
"Their hopes badly shattered, I quickly repair.

"I walk side by side with the high and the low,
"Same to me is the palace and the beggars' dark row.

"Never idle am I, but on some journey bound,
"From the head prison-shorn to the head regal-crowned.

"None call on me in vain, never deaf is my ear,
"One has but to suggest and at once I appear.

"Those who my counsel heed have no cause for regret,
"All their sorrows and troubles they soon do forget.

"What now preys on your mind is to me clear and plain,
"That which seemed beyond reach, you now soon can
obtain.

"Sometimes in man's brain dormant lies,
"That which he cannot well analyze,
"But its presence can never disguise.

"In my travels do I often find
"Those who to themselves are quite blind,
"Cannot see the disease in their mind.

"Why should you try yourself to deceive,
"Why should you, here alone, sit and grieve,
"Why cannot you in me quite believe?

"Suppose I had from coming refrained,
"And that I had your hand not restrained,
"Would you thereby have anything gained?

"Suppose you had done as intended,
"And your own lonely life soon had ended,
"Upon what would you then have depended?

"You then would have been lost forever,
"By that act alone, you could never
"Rejoin that which your own hand did sever.

"Over this has man long argued well,
"If exists either Heaven or Hell,
"If so be, there's none living can tell.

“Take that which you can and be sure,
“That which you can grasp fast secure,
“For the mind that’s diseased there’s no cure.

“In the morn as your face in the mirror you view,
“You will say to yourself ‘Can this thing be true?
“ ‘I see not Jean Rivard, but an old man made new.’

“One condition remains which I now will define,
“That with your own blood this compact will sign,
“That when the end comes, your soul will be mine.”

In the words well intoned he dispelled
Any doubts that remained in Jean’s mind,
By the long pointed pen that he held
Would ink from Jean’s wrist quickly find.
Although now quite benumbed was Jean’s brain,
It took him not long which to choose;
It seemed he could everything gain,
Was not sure he would anything lose.
Would by it youth regain
If the offer accepted,
Would an old man remain
If the offer rejected.
Left alone, going mad, could not there longer stay,
So he chose what then seemed the only feasible way.
That what Jean soon did sign, he scarcely had read,
Had taken for granted all the Stranger had said.
With a heart diabolical,
And a mind psychological,

Had he made clear to Jean what had seemed most illogical.
By words vaguely written,
True meaning well hidden,
Jean remembered, too late, there was ONE thing forbidden.

Spoke the Stranger again; "Before I depart,
Look well upon what will be burned in your heart."
And there stood a SOMETHING, in a cloak flaming red,
With no eyes, but two holes filled with live coals instead,
From his head grew two horns, on the ground hung a tail,
With no feet, but two hoofs, his legs covered with mail,
And then came a flash with a deafening roar,
Senseless and blinded, Jean fell to the floor.

In the night's darkest hour, which precedes the morn,
On the floor, unattended, a new Jean was born,
With the face, form and vigor, of a twenty year youth,
Had no lie told the Stranger, for mirrors speak truth.
For France and his Phillip, Jean departed at dawn,
Left the cottage unkempt, with curtains undrawn,
Had forgotten the heart long under the sod,
Knew not his own name, remembered no God.

Where once had been flowers
Now are brambles and weeds,
The fruit long has rotted,
The ground covered with seeds.
The cottage door left unlocked
Has swung open far wide,

Soon the birds, unmolested,
 Will their nests build inside.
All the stray, homeless dogs
 Who before, slinking passed,
Can a warm shelter find
 From the cold winter blast,
And the cottage in which
 Little Phillip had played,
Ere its master returns
 Will have long been decayed.

End of Part Four

JEAN RIVARD

PART FIVE

Jean, the Soldier
The Hindu, and the Crusader Sword

JEAN RIVARD

Jean was known as 'The Silent,' to talk not inclined,
About him there was something quite strange, undefined,
Who, aloof from the rest, had in his quiet way
The drills fully mastered in almost a day,
An order once given, was no use to repeat,
No emergency 'rose but was ready to meet,
Quick was he to adapt, as one to the life born,
Was the new Jean Rivard, changed in name and in form.

It was as John Revor, that Jean had enlisted,
In the choice of a name by The Stranger assisted,
For Jean it were better it should be somewhat similar,
So he chose one that sounded to Jean quite familiar.
His Phillip ne'er dreamed, never knew from the start,
There stood one in the ranks, of which he was a part.
But the John was still Jean, and could scarcely conceal
What the one who had named him had forbade him reveal.

In the compact JEAN signed, he had not understood
He'd remain undisclosed, or that instant he would
Be transformed back again to the original Jean,
Far removed from his lad with wide waters between.
The words which to Jean at the time were not plain

In letters of fire now flashed through his brain,
By a master of guile was this compact well drawn,
It was Life's game of chess, with Jean as the pawn.

Of the Hell down below must be left to conception,
What it can be on earth was to John no deception.
Has there been by none held a brush that could picture
What no mind of man could ever conjecture—
The grief most acute which bowed John in despair,
Not to speak to his lad, touch his hand, stroke his hair.
In this plan well conceived,
 In purport not defined,
Was the plan that deceived
 A plain trusting mind.

Of his company's men was there one quite as diffident,
Who by birth, creed and race, was from John, wholly
 different.
In John's great tribulation,
He then sought consolation
Of one that did prove, in the end, his salvation.
Neither one friend invited,
Either one friend resented,
Alike, yet most unlike, a strange pair presented.
One of race subjugated,
The other, Hell-fated,
Not by blood, but by mind, were they closely related.

John's comrade, a Hindu, was a lord in his land,
Who as soldier now served with the Allied command.
Unknown to his sword were there no lands or climes,
In each had in battle been engaged many times.
With muscles like steel, and heart of a child,
The keen eye of a hawk, a tongue undefiled,
Quick to strike when was need, to anger quite slow,
The warmest of friends or the bitterest foe.

Tall, lean and swarthy, and most supple of limb,
He seemed made for the sword, not the sword made for
him.

His skill with the foils was a wonder to see,
As he took them by one, by two, and by three.
Fascinated John stood, longed to hold in his hand
The other foil brought from the far Eastern land.
Of John asked the Hindu, while a moment he rested,
To hold the foil's mate, John the challenge accepted.
As he then faced his friend through his arm went a thrill,
There he took all the blows, did not leave off until
He'd made his first pass as he broke down the guard;
He would soon be its master, there was naught to retard.

So adept became John, and so eager to learn,
Before scarcely he knew it, found it easy to turn
The foil ever pointing at face or at heart,
Rejoiced then his teacher, for with him 'twas an art.
He was glad that at last lived a man that could stand
'Gainst the sword that had slashed through many a land,
Which he kept safely guarded from all prying eyes,
Lest some, not too honest, might covet the prize.

A Damasacus it was, the only one of its kind,
And the acme of craft, by a master designed.
Of his effort supreme he left no duplicate.
The long process, by which only he could create
Such a master piece rare, remained ever unknown,
For the grave which is dumb holds the secret alone.
And the fame of that city since his day has declined,
Those who there dwell are not of a sword-making mind.

The guard round the hilt was of pure beaten gold,
Its surface was chased and with strange emblems scrolled;
In the top was inserted a many-hued stone,
Such as few in the East, except princes, can own.
A branch from the tree it could lop off with ease,
Tear the leaves into shreds as they flew with the breeze,
Would a thin paper cut when tossed upward in air,
And drawn over the hand, it would sever a hair.

End of Part Five

JEAN RIVARD

PART SIX

The Tale the Hindu Told

JEAN RIVARD

In their trenches at night
The Hindu once told of a Prince who had lived
In the days that were old.
Who an army maintained,
And vassals beside; in his stronghold secure
Other Rajahs defied.
By his sword filled his coffers
With silver and gold; had in blood waded deep
For this fortune untold.
And the many rare jewels
That he'd gained by his pelf, did exceed the ones owned
By the Mogul himself.

Though his heart was like flint,
Yet most keen was his brain; would not others entrust
With his ill-gotten gain.
So a chest he designed,
By his slaves was it made; when their task they had finished
Underground soon they laid.
Made of steel was the chest
That weighed many a stone; held by chains to the floor,
And the cover alone
Was such that the weight
Took the two hands to raise, and the labor thereon
Had consumed many days.

In its edge was a knife,
Long and keen, hid from view; of its presence there none,
Save the Prince, ever knew.
Held by weights and by springs,
When wide open would stand quite firm and secure,
But should a strange hand
Its contents disturb,
Then 'twould fall with a crash, and the hand or the arm
Now caught fast, it would slash
Like the bone 'neath the cleaver,
By a blow cut in twain; there were none that escaped,
There were none tried again.

But his most precious gem
Was not found in the chest; had never King Solomon
Its like e'er possessed.
A Pearl for which many
A prince had despaired; Venus-formed, ivory-skinned,
Azure-eyed, golden-haired.
A most wondrous creation
Which had best be explained; her mother, Circassian,
As the 'Beauty' had reigned.
Swore the Prince, by Mahomet,
When her time came to wed, by a king would his daughter
To the altar be led.

To the Rajah, one day
A strange courier brought, a request that to answer
Required deepest thought.
One of Germany's kinglets

To the Princess aspired, (had an eye to the gold
That the Prince had acquired.)
But the Prince, over-cautious,
Was to haste not inclined, bade the envoy remain
Till he'd made up his mind.
Took into his castle
This knight, never dreaming, that with tongue smooth as
satin
Was a brain, ever scheming.

Of his own father's name
His mother knew not, what occurred before wedlock,
For convenience, forgot.
It's more tactful at times
Not to rake over-deep, lest the nostrils offend
By the over-ripe heap.
Without name or fortune,
Yet was that in his mien, could no woman resist,
Maid, Princess, or Queen.
The proud Rajah cajoled,
While the Princess desired, with a longing that came
From a heart foul-bemired.

The Prince dared not take
The chest key to the field, doubted much where it could
Be in safety concealed.
Throughout all his domain
By his hand most defiled, in but one could he trust,
The young Princess, his child.
Whom his eunuchs well guarded

By day and by night, those who dared her approach
Would their swift doom invite.
To her girdle, the key
Could be strongly secured, when the Prince was away
Of its safety assured.

Of the hours there were few
When the Rajah remained at rest in his castle
When could gold be obtained.
In the saddle he soon
Led his merciless horde, the chest to replenish
By his never-sheathed sword.
As the greed-eaten Hun,
Seeing only the key, chose well then his words,
By his false lips had he
Seldom failed with the fair,
There were many could tell, by his serpent eye charmed,
Who had listened too well.

As they sat side by side, and her hand gently pressed,
Not of her were his thoughts, but the great treasure-chest.
And he bided his time, as he told once again
What to maidens will ever a mystery remain.
So well did she pay
For this innocent bliss,
Not until the next day
Did the treasure key miss.

When the castle was quiet,
And all within slept, this crown and-rag offspring
To the vault slowly crept.
Where stood the great chest
With its jewels most rare, in their size and in lustre
There were none could compare.
With the key in the lock
He made a quick turn, as the cover uplifted
His eyes seemed to burn
As though had been thrust
In the bright noon-day sun, or a million of stars
Which in truth they outshone.

Stooping over the chest
It was first one he took, then a larger one chose,
This again he forsook
For another more brilliant,
Ever changing, did grieve, that in gold and in silver
Would a king's ransom leave.
Then as one of his hands
Both of which were inside, in its greed touched the spring
That the jewels now hide,
Swiftly down came the lid
On the head that leaned o'er, it remained in the chest,
Fell his trunk to the floor.

Ended now is the tale
That the dark Hindu told,
Of a race that has ever
Been craving for gold.

Those who survived the trench
Still relate to this day
What he there at night told
In his strange Eastern way.

End of Part Six

JEAN RIVARD

PART SEVEN

Death of the Hindu



JEAN RIVARD

In a place well advanced, near the land oft contested,
Phillip with his command, half equipped, was intrenching.
Could not question the orders from the colonel commanding,

Who had to that sector been hastily transferred,
Why he should be there placed by no cannon supported,
What to him seemed a blunder, must as soldier obey.
To hold what he had he was fully determined,
But would not of himself his own men sacrifice.
Many mines he now laid, by fine wire connected,
Which could be in an instant all together exploded.

Were his efforts repaid sooner than he had reckoned,
One morn saw the trenches by dense fog enveloped
That beyond a few yards could not eye penetrate.
Phillip called in his men, and stationed the outposts
Within the small area that by mines were protected.
By all was it known that inside the barbed wire,
Lay hidden and dormant what could be quickly awakened.
Nothing more could be done, but wait and be ready.

'Gainst the trench, most terrific, a shell fire soon opened,
Many hours before had the range been well taken,
The pickets came running and in the trench tumbled,
Phillip counted them all, the Hindu was missing.

In the mound of the trench was a large stone imbedded
Which now by the shells had become partly loosened.
When the next one would strike it, was John closely
 watching,
Soon it came rolling down bringing stones, sand, and
 gravel,
Leaving a hole such as one could well crawl through.
To this end of the trench, had been one slowly moving,
With a last look at Phillip, John on his quest started.

Too far from his lines had a Hun patrol ventured,
In the earth lying cloud had lost his location,
Lest he should a noise make, and with tread doubly
 cautious,
He came upon him who was the other way facing.
His loud speaking gun might bring swift retribution,
So he made a spring forward and used the dumb bayonet.
More than quick turned the Hindu, and the Hun started
 "Westward".
With eyes bloodshot and bulging, his black tongue pro-
 truding,
The Hindu's hand on his throat, it was thus that John
 found them.

John felt a slight heart-beat as he loosened the fingers
That now held the throat with a grip that was vise like.
On his shoulder he then threw his near lifeless comrade,
And ran with his burden through a gauntlet infernal.
Not a moment too soon had the two reached the trenches,
The shelling had stopped, and all knew what would follow.

By the hole through which John and the Hindu had entered

With the key to his fingers, there stood Phillip waiting.
By the sun's warming rays was now the fog lifting,
Disclosing to Phillip all inside the barbed wire,
The first Hun that crossed it would to him be the signal,
There would then be unloosened Hell's pent-up artillery.
Like a part of the fog, the grey Huns came running
In the trench unprotected, they soon would be mopping,
Most courageous were they when massed by the hundred,
But when separated, they soon cried "Kamerad".

To those in the trench came a sound more than deafening,

The ground rose and fell like a violent earthquake,
Against each other thrown, they fell over like ten-pins,
But they quickly rebounded, each hand to its rifle.
Then as over the top following close to their leader,
To the very last man were they sore disappointed,
Of the Huns who came running, there were none now left standing,
Arms and legs, trunks and heads, there lay the Hell-carrier.

As Phillip requested, John remained with the Hindu,
To a short breathing spell was John well entitled,
In the mud and in shell holes had he often fallen,
But the weight scarcely felt, as enraged onward struggled.
Whom the blood now was stanching, to him spoke the Hindu,

“Oh, lift high my head that I may see the sunlight,
“Let me not lay in darkness, for my eyes are bedimmed,
“Listen well to my words as I leave you my fortune,
“All that to me remains of what once I possessed.

“My sole treasure well guard, for it’s centuries old,
“It was torn from the hand of a Crusader bold,
“As he lay cold and stiff by Jerusalem’s door,
“With his feet on the threshold he never passed o’er.
“Of his name we know not, never could ascertain,
“But a Monarch he died, was the King of the slain.
“Handed down has it been from proud father to son,
“I bequeath it to you, for of sons have I none.”

Thus the brave Hindu died, passed away was the man
Who’d been John’s only friend since the Great War
began.

Much to John meant the gift from the one who had gone,
What the Hindu had dropped, John would still carry on.

End of Part Seven

JEAN RIVARD

PART EIGHT

The Croix de Guerre



JEAN RIVARD

O'er the field where the men were lined up at parade
Waved the Flag which they proudly had borne,
In its rags floating grandly, this Ensign now frayed,,
Had no hand of the Hun touched or torn.
This Banner of Freedom had in dust never trailed,
Staunchly held by brave lads from o'er-seas,
Their own Stars and Stripes had its trust never failed,
It would soon force the Huns to their knees.

John's comrades in mud-spotted khaki arrayed,
Had assembled near where stood the band,
And the name of the air which that morning was played,
Was the flag of their own native land.
Then as John past them marched to the General's tent,
Knowing not did this honor deserve,
At command the long ranks brought their arms to
"present"
Due all those who their country best serve.

Of those that were present were many that day
Who now envied this three months' recruit,
To have been in his shoes would have served without
pay,
For "The Silent" had earned their salute.

By the General standing was also his aide,
What he held could by few be possessed,
The small shining quadrant which he there displayed
Was more envied than title or crest.

John had come to a halt, at attention there stood
And saluted the one in command,
Until spoke the General, had wondered who would
Wear the cross that now lay in his hand.
"To LIEUTENANT Revor, who as soldier has shown
"That the ranks cannot well spare this loss,
"This commission is granted for merit alone,
"For bravery, is given the cross."

John was taken aback, his commission had won,
And the coveted great "Croix de Guerre"
Since he as a soldier plain duty had done,
Both the cross and the bars could he wear.
But his wits soon returned, as a thought chilled his
heart,
He could not there remain as before,
As an officer soon from his Phillip would part.
Answered John to him who ranked the Corps,

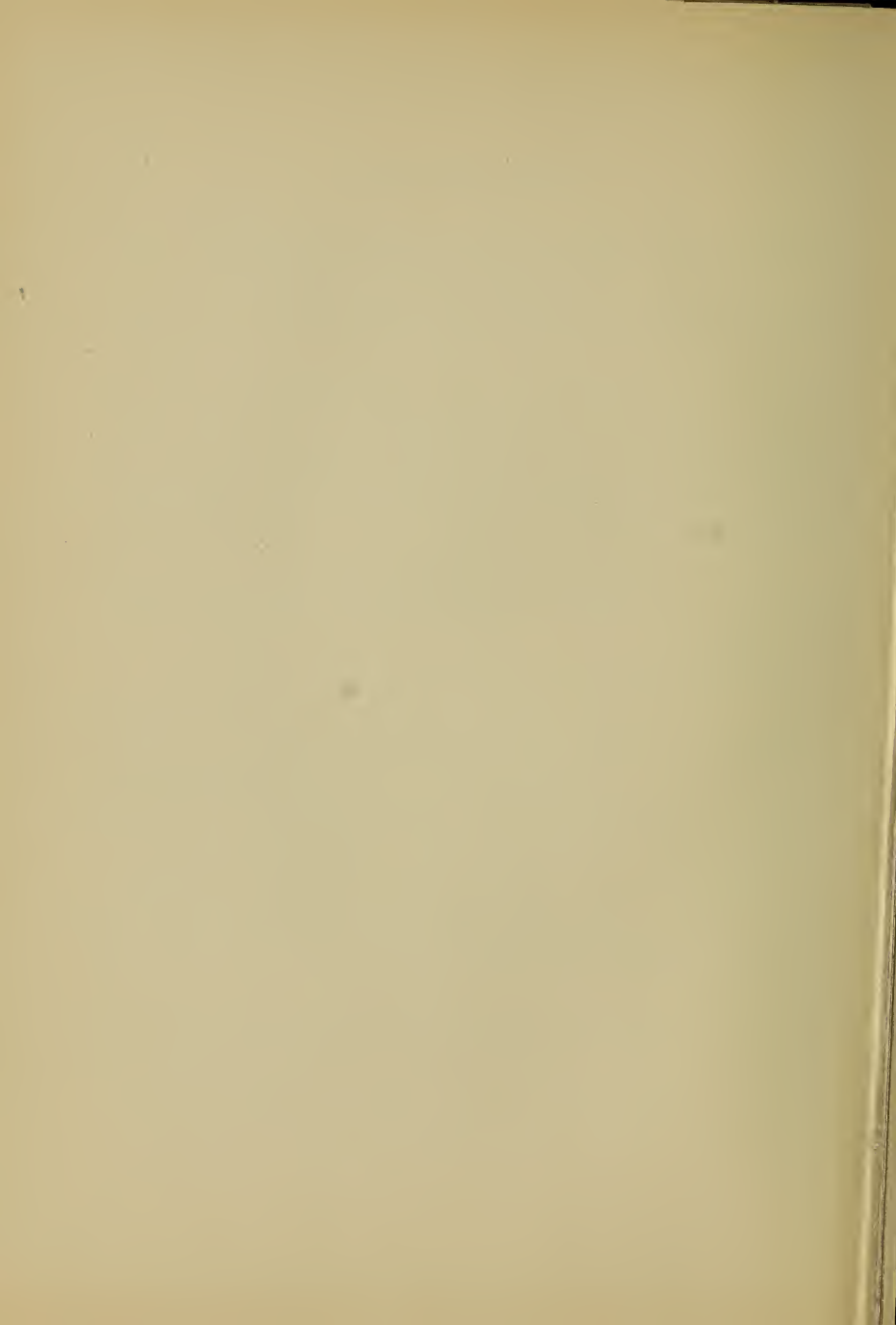
"The high honor conferred is refused with respect,
"For I crave neither glory nor fame,
"This great offer is one that I should not accept,
"As no officer's rank do I claim.

“But I make this request, in the ranks to remain,
“Where had well served the Hindu, the brave,
“The sword he once held, allow me to retain,
“Which he, passing out, to me gave.”

As the General's keen eye John closely did scan,
It seemed he had seen him before,
This soldier who spurned the greatest honor to man,
To some one a strong likeness bore.
Since there happened each day many things more than
strange,
For the present would grant his request,
On the morrow, perhaps, this man's mind he could
change,
He then pinned the small cross to John's breast.

From the locker in which it had been safely stored,
John took out the dead Hindu's keen blade,
By the length of his arm he now measured the sword,
Grasped it firm where the stone was inlaid.
And it made a queer hiss as it cut through the air,
Music sweet was this song without word,
In its high-pitched refrain did a strange message bear,
To its rhythm John practised the sword.

End of Part Eight



JEAN RIVARD

PART NINE

*'Tis reveille, and another day
What Jean heard in the trenches
Jean with Phillip in the hospital*

JEAN RIVARD

'Tis reveille, and another day,
But no bugle blast is heard,
The men are roused in a safer way,
By touch and shake and whispered word.
An order is now passed around,
"Send up reserves without delay,"
And the drowsy lads on the rain-soaked ground,
Prepare themselves for another day,
'Tis reveille, and another day.

'Tis the hour of noon but no halt is made,
There's no limit to what these men can stand,
Too long already had been delayed
By the gluey mud of Flanders' land.
They gritted their teeth as they shifted their pack
With but one thought, to each mind clear,
That no power on earth could hold them back
Till they'd make the Hun pay doubly dear
Before reveille of another day.

The sun has set, and the tired band
Had exacted the toll, most dearly paid,
And they rest on their guns on the slimy land,
Of nothing that walks, nor of the Devil afraid.
For they held their own in this Hell's affray,

As the enemy fled there was one long shout,
(Score this as the end of a perfect day)

"Taps have sounded, your damned lights will be out
"Before reveille of another day."

'Tis reveille, of another day,
And the roll call is now heard,
There's Tom, and Jack, but Bill's away,
There comes no answering word.
The sergeant paused as he looked around,
Then slowly read to the end of the list,
There were many who slept on the blood-soaked ground,
Leaving those who the touch of their elbow missed
At reveille, of another day.

Now John by this time had grown calloused and hard,
Did suffering and pain with indifference regard,
In the loss of his friend, and from Phillip estranged,
John's once simple nature had been greatly changed.
Each day in the trench was there one item more
Making still larger the already long score.
When the time came for settling, he would full payment
ask,
What laid in his locker,
Would make easy the task.

The small daily bickerings John seemed not to hear,
To this idle talk deaf, but he had a quick ear
For the tales that were true, yet most hard to believe,
Only Huns, Hell-inspired,

Crimes so base could conceive.
Of the babes that were found piled up high in a heap,
Who had cried for their milk till kind death brought them
 sleep,
The children they'd killed on the way to their school,
And the horrors that changed
The bright lad to a fool.

Of young virgins compelled by the bayonet thrust
To choose either death, or submit to their lust,
The infirm, sick, and aged, that were forced by the guns
To march well in advance of the cowardly Huns.
Made drunk from babes' blood and insane in their hate,
More than this had they done, deeds too foul to relate.
Led on by their master, who did each carnage plan,
And was Satan, himself, in the guise of a man.

Of the red-handed Huns, in the trench it was said,
Had been hatched in the slimes of pools stagnant and
 dead,
Then with torch lit in Hades, and held waving high
Were they belched from the pits of their own infamy.
More foul than the scum from the cauldrons of Hell,
But one thing to their credit,
THEY DID THEIR WORK WELL.
John heard all they said, in his brain was it stored,
He then opened his locker,
And began whetting his sword.

What John long had suppressed, now could hardly
 restrain,
As he whetted, then polished, now whetted again,
For each spot he removed, there was added a curse
That the sulphurous lake would their black souls im-
 merse,
In fires eternal might their bodies be thrust,
Their tongues become parched, and caked over with
 dust.
They would then crave for what the poor babes had
 implored,
It was not the old Jean
Who was whetting the sword.

It so happened one day, that a fragment of shell,
With a force but half spent, into Phillip's trench fell,
And but for his helmet which its course did deflect,
Would have torn down a structure that no man could
 erect.

John sprang to his lad and the helmet removed
To search for the wound; on the temple was grooved
The path of the shell that had just missed the brain,
A small inch had divided
The quick from the slain.

To the base hospital, far removed to the rear,
Many miles from the front where no wounded could hear
The screams of the shells as they burned through the air,
Did the ambulance filled, o'er the roads swiftly tear.

For John, though not wounded, had with Phillip remained,
He held his lad's hand, and the tears unrestrained
Could not dim the bright light that from John's eyes now
shone,
After many long months,
He was holding his own.

As the surgeon in charge now examined the wound
He looked grave and concerned when quickly he found
The skull badly fractured, must at once be trephined,
It was *the* last resort which might save the lad's mind.
With hand quick and firm, such as this case required,
Was for him just the one that he long had desired.
When John asked to remain, to the Chief was referred,
John belonged to the trench,
And trained men were preferred.

John presented himself to the Surgeon-in-Chief,
Whose force, near exhausted, was demanding relief,
Of him asked, as a nurse, if he could be assigned
To the hospital tent where a friend was confined.
As the overworked Chief, by emergency pressed,
Could not then better do, granted John his request.
At once wrote an order by which John was retained,
A small lie John had told,
But his object was gained.

In this race against Time, with a life for the goal,
In this fight for a mind which might yet be made whole,

In this battle, in which Phillip then had no share,
Over all was the Victor, who had laid the brain bare.
'Gainst the scythe, bright and keen, was science then
 pitted,
But knife and scalpel, the Grim Reaper outwitted.
All he needed was care, for full well had they learned
That the scale of the balance
By a hair might be turned.

The surgeons were pleased that on this man could depend
As they closely watched John who did Phillip attend,
Bathed his face, sponged his lips, smoothed the thick
 tangled hair,
Stayed the hand that in frenzy tried the bandage to
 tear,
Turned the pillows o'er and o'er, 'neath the fever-burned
 head,
Spread the sheets, changed the pads, re-arranged the
 hard bed,
Once before for his babe, John had long vigils kept,
Once again there were days
When he ate not nor slept.

Phillip tossed on his bed, through his brain madly raced
All his life's petty trifles which had long been effaced.
Of his first day at school and the quaint little maid
Who his apples had shared as they barefooted played.
Then it was of the one who had stood at the gate,

And like all mothers worried when her boy returned late.
Then he spoke of one near whom his eyes did not know,
Who to him had been all
In the long, long ago.

As John his hand passing o'er the lad's fevered brow
Ceased were the long ramblings, it seemed as if now
Over him was change coming, for a moment was still,
"The hand of my father," had these words tried to fill
The empty heart aching for this message of cheer.
But it was transient only, soon again did John hear
The mad cries and ravings of a shell-battered brain,
With flood gates well open,
Could nothing remain.

When John heard these few words, he that moment forgot
He was tied more secure than a Gordian knot.
Without further delay, his true self would disclose
To his lad, who exhausted, had now sunk in repose.
Then John felt a touch, quickly turned was his head,
There stood one which caused John to move nearer the
bed.

John well recollected, from his lips came a curse,
Such as none in the trenches
Had ever heard worse.

At the impotent words the Stranger then laughed,
And remarked, "You shall now drink a most bitter
draught,
"Think but for a second and your mind soon will change,

"In the compact you signed, did my plans well arrange,
"For the instant you call the sick lad there your son,
"To your own lonely cottage has your journey begun."
With right hand to left side, John another curse roared,
He had left in his locker
The Crusader sword.

But all things have an end, the time came when again
Were there no clouds hanging over Phillip's worn brain.
In his eyes there was absent the cold vacant stare,
And the surgeon well knew it was due to John's care.
Did not know then that in the sick lad and the man
From their hearts through their veins, the same blood
freely ran.
Though the skill he had shown had brought well-deserved
fame,
This passed on to him
Who had much better claim.

Phillip now wore the bars of the next higher grade,
At the General's request had a captain been made,
With his men, waited orders near a spot God-forsaken
Which had often changed hands, by the Huns last re-
taken.
Like a hound at the leash, he did now fret and chafe,
To get back at the Huns with their damnable "Strafe."
And the locker John used had been robbed of its hoard,
Where John ate, walked, or slept, was the Crusader
sword.

That of which John had dreamed, at last had come true,
He now soon would collect the bill long overdue,
For the great General's mind which appeared to know all
Phillip's feat with the mines did this moment recall.
As he placed him in charge more than thrice his command
To drive back the Hell-spawned o'er their blood-sodden
land.

Phillip wondered why John, while all the rest cheered,
Had alone remained silent and abstracted appeared.
John was then thinking how his friend's last words had
ended,

"From proud father to son the great sword had descended."

What would be, could not change, even had he so willed,
Perhaps that day would see the tradition fulfilled.

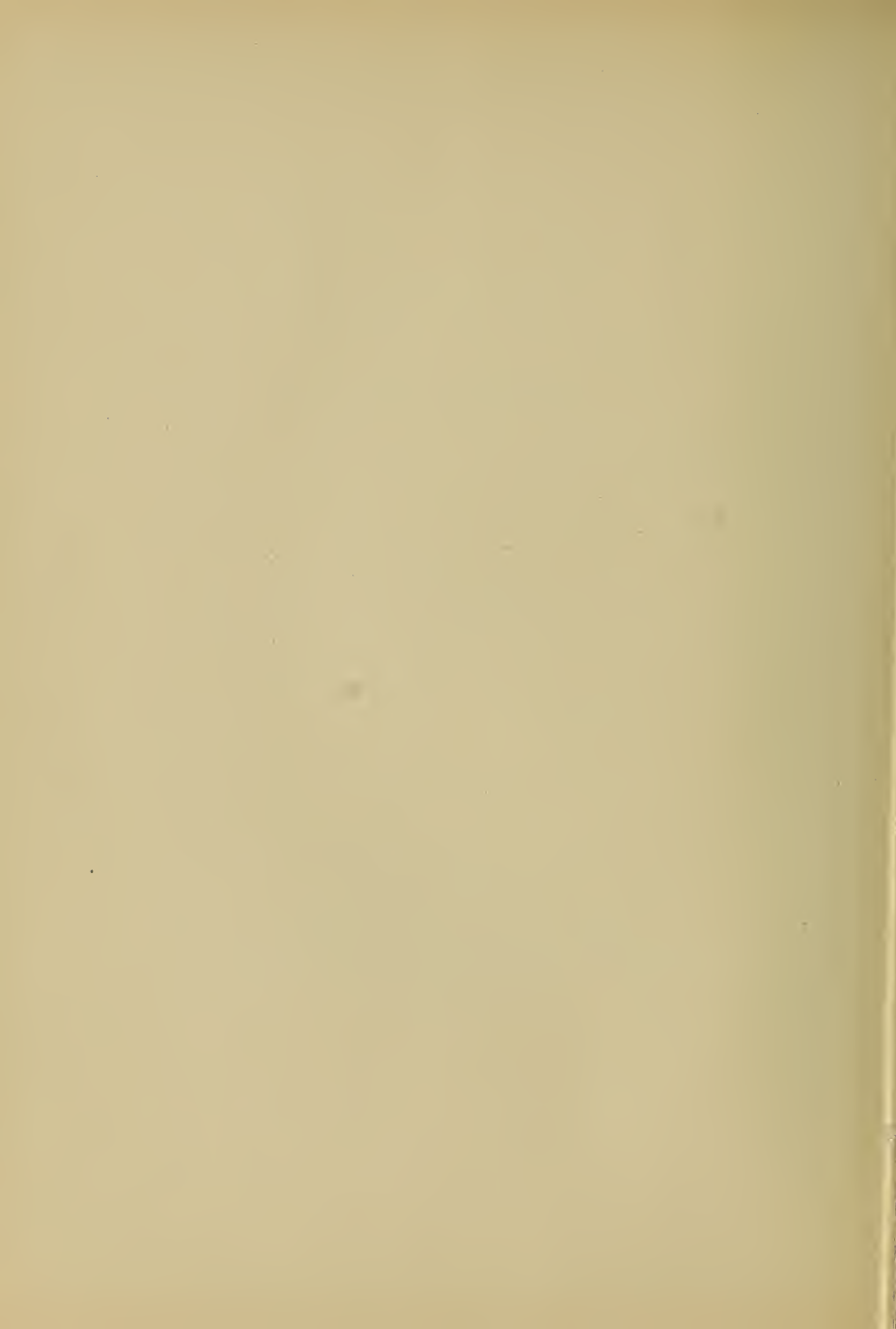
End of Part Nine



JEAN RIVARD

PART TEN

Just a Slip of a Lad
The Great Battle
Jean, Phillip and the Devil
The Duel between Phillip and the Devil
Death of Jean



JEAN RIVARD

Just a slip of a lad,
As he marched his men towards "No Man's Land."
Tall, bearded men who had been there before,
Who had jested with Death in Hell's abode.
For the trenches were such as tried men's souls,
And their hearts went out to their leader pale,
Who had stood on the brink of the yawning grave,
Hardly fit for the task
Was this slip of a lad.

Just a slip of a lad,
In the cold wet trenches of "No Man's Land."
No sound is now heard but the shrieking shells
As they burst and scatter their murderous hail.
Bronzed faces blanch, for they've been there before,
And the ribald jest is that morning unheard.
For the jaws of Hell are opened wide,
And are waiting to snap
At this slip of a lad.

Just a slip of a lad
As he formed his men for the coming charge
And counted those off with the hand-grenades.
Detailing each man to the place he best fitted,

Well every man knew what of him was expected.
Nearly all of them had in a like place been before,
There was no man but thought this day might his last be
Much there now does depend
On their slip of a lad.

Just a slip of a lad,
As he made his last round, and looked in each eye.
Unwavering they stood with their cold shining steel,
Held by arms that had never been shaken by fear.
'Tis a place where quick brain against tall stature wins,
'Tis a time when a man in an hour grows old,
'Tis a day when the life of a nation's at stake,
Now had come the great moment
For this slip of a lad.

"Follow me," Phillip cried, as he led the attack,
"We are here," answered they, who now stood at his
back.
Then as John cleared the top, from his lips came a yell,
That was heard 'bove the voice of the rifle or shell.
Which he did oft repeat
In that hand to hand fray,
Drowned the call for retreat
When their best on ground lay,
Saved them all from defeat
On that memorable day.

Like an Argus-eyed Samson, guarding Phillip, his son,
John was Athos, and Porthos, and Aramis in one.
In John's reincarnation,
Of some long dead relation,
Was embodied the spirit of Joan of Arc's nation.
For John, true American, from the French had descended,
And in Phillip, his lad, was the Allied blood blended.

Flame-spitting,
Brain-hitting, was his gun, Huns quick dropping,
Blood-spilling,
Swift-killing, was his sword, Huns quick stopping.
Death-daring,
None-sparing, an Apollyon advancing,
Yell-hearing,
Death-fearing, backed the Huns, faces blanching.

Thrusting hard for his heart at one time there were
four,
But he stepped o'er them all, none there could hold
before
The dead weight of his gun, or the Crusader sword,
As he struck,
as he stabbed,
as he slashed,
as he bored.

By the bayonet unbending,
Or the butt end descending,
To where they belonged, now was John the Huns sending.
With the sword in his left,
And the gun in his right,
Fought he as only one
Damned eternal would fight.

Back to back to his Phillip, as the two stood at bay,
John had singled a Hun slowly working his way
To get next to his lad, and then from John's tongue
Came a torrent unchecked of the mind now unstrung.
"Take from me, John Revor,
What to you, ends the war,"
John yelled, as he thrust, and so sure was the aim
That the Hun backward fell where he lay with the slain.
By the new broken bayonet, firmly pinned to the ground,
From the Babe-killer's lips came a guttural sound
Which was borne to John's ears
Through the din of the battle,
Not for long had John waited
For the well-known death-rattle.

Was awakened at last
The long sleeping volcano,
Levelling all in its blast,
The wide sweeping tornado.
The gun irresistible,
The long sword invincible,
Ear-piercing, far-reaching,

The yell, more than terrible,
With the butt of his rifle, which was now soaked in blood,
Cracked the skulls open wide, with a sickening thud,
John heard not their cries as he over them trod,
War-demented,
Heaven-watched,
Not forgotten by God.
By their brave John inspired, the outnumbered band
Pushed the Hell-vermin back o'er their corpse-rotting
land.

Crimson red, was the ground
Thickly strewn with grey Huns,
Only dead were there found
Near their now silent guns.
This great battle, in which blood like water did flow,
This dearly won battle,
This sword and gun battle,
Was THE battle by which John Revor was laid low.

On the shell-burrowed field, near the noon of that day,
By the flying shrapnel, John Revor wounded lay.
The brave ambulance corps
In this carnage appalling,
Had a short time before
Passed to those for aid calling.
John remembered not them, either war, sword, or gun,

All alike were to him, whether Allied or Hun.
Forgotten, had he, as to why he there laid,
But he then well recalled
HIM to whom he once prayed.

"Oh, God," cried poor John, "grant me now this small
boon,
"As I was when he left, let me speak to my son."
Ere the words left his lips, when as though from the air,
The soul-cry expecting, the Stranger stood there.
"Call you not upon God, do not try to defy,
"It's a name that's forbidden while yet I stand by.
"For the compact we made will be ended this day,
"The debt is now due,
"And with interest you'll pay."

It must have been pity, better yet, might have been
That the ONE who knows all had this meeting foreseen,
Wished to curb Satan's pride, and thus teach him his
place.

Of this none did there know, but over John's face
Came quickly a change, and his hair, black as night,
In that moment was turned to a silvery white,
And there on the ground lay the brave JEAN RIVARD,
Instead of an Angel
The Devil on guard.

Jean the Devil ignored, and the word he forbade
Was shrieked, "Oh, my God, send me Phillip, my lad."
Phillip seemed as one dazed, as the name reached his ear,

Was in doubt if the battle had left his mind clear.
From his father had come this loud wail of distress
That was torn from the heart in its greatest duress.
With a leap cleared the trench as his sword he held bare,
Would have jumped into Hell
Had the call come from there.

O'er the brave Jean Rivard, a Stranger there stood,
With a look on his face that foreboded no good,
Where should have been pity, now instead was a leer,
And his thin cruel lips were incurved with a sneer.
Who stepped forward a pace as he made a half turn,
So that Phillip, advancing, would not quickly discern
That the man lying there was the one that had cried
To his God, for his Phillip,
And the Devil defied.

Phillip gripped firm his sword, the words came hard and
fast,

"How have you without uniform the double guard passed?

"There are base traitors here, and I swear to my God,

"Soon with you will they stand 'fore the sure-firing
squad.

"If my surmise is correct

"You are naught but a spy,

"Give today's countersign

"Or you will like a dog die."

“You that here doth command, now your anger restrain,
“For this man that’s near death can better explain
“Why I should here stand without arms or war garb,
“In my tongue is my sword, and most keen is its barb.
“I no countersign have, and none do I need,
“No guards, locks, or bars, can my movements impede.
“So blame not the sentry, in your judgment be slow,
“There were none saw me come,
“There will none see me go.”

With a feeling unknown, much akin to dismay,
In an instant was Phillip, where the wounded man lay,
He well knew the form, with the silver crowned head,
The hand, that so carefully his first steps had led,
The plain honest face, with the lines creased by care,
Only one, could it be, who at Death now does stare.
Quickly there Phillip knelt, upraised then Jean’s head,
Listened close to his lips
For the words faintly said.

“Embrace me, dear son, and my hand tightly clasp,
“Oh, press harder yet, that I may feel the grasp
“Of your warm loving hands,’ and I now will lay bare
“The deed that was done while in greatest despair.
“Know then, my dear lad, when your mother we lost
“And by faith alone buoyed, she the dark river crossed,
“Was there taken from us to replace which were none,
“Left to me to well finish that which she had begun.

"From the day of your birth had the dear heart desired,
"Capped and gowned of your college, would she see you
attired,

"Ever guided by her who had gone on before,
"Of what I then tried, there were none could do more.
"Then as older, and taller, and stronger you grew,
"And unconscious released what was latent in you,
"Although long seemed the road, yet I well saw the end,
"You some day would preside where you once did attend.

"When in years came The War, and you held fast my
hand,

"Perhaps for the last, ere you sailed for the land
"To which many had gone, from which few might return,
"The blood froze in my veins, it was then I did learn
"You were all of my life, and my God soon defied,
"With Satan then bargained, so could fight by your side.
"Was by him changed in form, as well as in name,
"But my mind and my heart remained ever the same.
"In one thing am content, knowing well as we part,
"That some day, you again will be near the dear heart,
"Say to her, my brave lad, that in his last distress,
"Her Jean thought of but three,
"God, Phillip, and Jess."

Jean's breath came in gasps, and his hands now were
cold,

In the glaze of the eyes there was plainly foretold
That the end now was near, which might yet be delayed,
For Phillip while kneeling, had silently prayed

That for but one short hour
Might the end be deferred,
By his sword then would cancel the debt Jean had incurred.
Phillip sobbed like a child as a tear unchecked ran
Down the cheek, once of Jean,
But now, Superman.

Phillip pulled off his coat and a soft pillow made,
His dear father's head thereon tenderly laid,
And then turned to the Devil, who patiently stood
Awaiting Jean's death, soon to be, when he could
With his treasure depart,
For a trophy so rare
Was well worth the while, many hours could he spare.
Of the souls that he'd snared, now engulfed in his mire,
They were naught to the one that he soon would acquire.

"Round the world's greatest girth, or from far pole to pole,
"You will search long in vain for another such soul,
"For this man at my feet whose hard race is near run,
"There's no greater honor than to be known as his son.
" 'Twas for me that he made this Supreme Sacrifice,
"A gold crown he should wear in God's bright Paradise.
"As his son, and a soldier, this challenge I make,
"We will fight to the death, and should our swords break,

"Then to pistols we'll turn, and may God hold my hand
"To direct well my aim, for you'll die where you stand.
"My soul is the forfeit, if the battle you've won,
"If not, both go free, it is two souls or none."

Satan pondered a moment, then answered "'Tis well,
"Both you and your father will sojourn in Hell,
"Yonder soul is my own, none can now cheat my due,
"I came for one only, I shall go back with two.
"Leave your blade where 'tis sheathed, for you surely
will die,
"In the art of the sword, the world's master am I.
"It's not often to foolish diversions I bend,
"But my time's well repaid if so by I can send
"An unwilling soul to my regions below,
"To languish eternal in unutterable woe,
"Draw then if you will, let us brook no delay,
"Those who my time consume, in the end fully pay."

With a nonchalant air, he picked up from the ground
What had once graced the hand of a monarch uncrowned.
No novice is he, bending back the long blade
Of what was well said, no apprentice had made.
This pastime well relished, for unknown to the lad
His heart safely guarding, was in mail partly clad.
For Satan, as Man, when he roams o'er the land,
Not IMMORTAL is he, does with Man equal stand.

“Except to your father, who there wounded lies,
“Invisible are we to all mortal eyes.
“Your name have I added to my already long roll,
“On guard then, you fool, and to Hell with your soul.”

Eye to eye,
Sword to sword,
The strange combat begins,
A pale, beardless youth 'gainst the Monarch of Sins.
But not so unequal as at first would appear,
Phillip's fame with the sword was well known far and
near.

With the right or the left, he was equally skilled,
Either arm full controlled,
He could do as he willed.

Blow for blow,
Steel to steel,
Neither vantage could gain,
The odds appeared even, it was brain against brain.
They now fight for position, and each vainly tries
To well hold the sun's glare in his opponent's eyes.
As the thrusts and the parries 'tween the two swiftly
passed.

Phillip thought of the hour that was then waning fast,
No sooner had Phillip a new feint or pass tried,
But each, Satan countered,
Phillip's sword turned aside.

Step by step,
Blade to blade,
The small circle they raced,
Now forward, then back, with no telling blow placed,
Then Satan, impatient at the time being lost,
By one blow strove to break the sword his had crossed.
Like a bolt, Phillip then through the open guard tierced
With aim that, unerring, would have Satan's heart
pierced.
The point glanced with a shock that his fingers could
feel,
Phillip finds out at last
That his foe's clad in steel.

Phillip then knew the hand that he had to contend,
Also knew that two souls on his sword did depend,
But had been placed before where his quick wits had won,
In a second, side-stepped, by the unclouded sun
Were Satan's eyes dimmed.
Phillip struck fast and hard,
By his favorite feint he broke down the guard,
And lunged for the eyes, so fierce was the thrust,
As Satan reeled backward,
His head struck the dust.

With the roar of a lion, that has long been enchained,
Before Phillip could move, had his feet well regained,
Phillip's aim had been good, but it landed too high,
There was now a wide gash just above Satan's eye.

Chagrined by the thought that a new-to-war lad,
Had drawn the first blood,
Satan sent all he had.
Ever coming, his sword did before Phillip play,
Phillip still kept his guard,
But he slowly gave way.

Poor Phillip, brave lad, was now sorely pressed,
He was fighting THE MASTER, and craved for a rest,
If but for a second, a short respite obtained,
For his fingers were numb and his muscles were strained.
In drops of blood sweated,
Which slowly did drip
To the hilt of his sword, and thus loosened his grip
As he shifted to left, and again to the right,
Awaiting the time
He could thrust with his might.

As he thought of his father, facing Death, undismayed,
Of the Great Sacrifice he'd unselfishly made,
Came a lump in his throat, and a tear then did fall,
He only was human,
And a lad, after all.
Then as though doomed by fate, o'er a sword belt he
tripped
Which had half buried lain, unguarded he slipped
With one knee to the ground, with his life soon would
part,
Could not ward off the steel
That was aimed at his heart.

As Jean's fast closing eyes saw his Phillip outdone,
Near expiring, he cried

"Oh, God, save my son."

At the sacred word, "God,"

Satan startled did glance for a second at Jean,

AND THE LAD SAW HIS CHANCE.

With a strength newly born, and both hands to the sword,
His knee then unbent,

Like a flash, upward gored.

With his heart cut in two, Satan backward was thrown,

He had lost the two souls,

Back to Hell went alone.

Leaving sword where 'twas thrust, then to Jean, Phillip
ran,

It was just one half hour since the combat began.

And the last words that passed between father and son,

Were these simple four,

"My Phillip, well done."

Then from Jean's tired heart golden mist did arise,

Which shaped like a crown

As it mounted the skies.

Jean's soul, battle-purged, has received its reward,

Re-united now with the dear heart, near his Lord.

Where had been Satan lying, the ground now was bare,

The sword belt excepting, Phillip saw nothing there

Save only "The Two" which had made their last thrust,

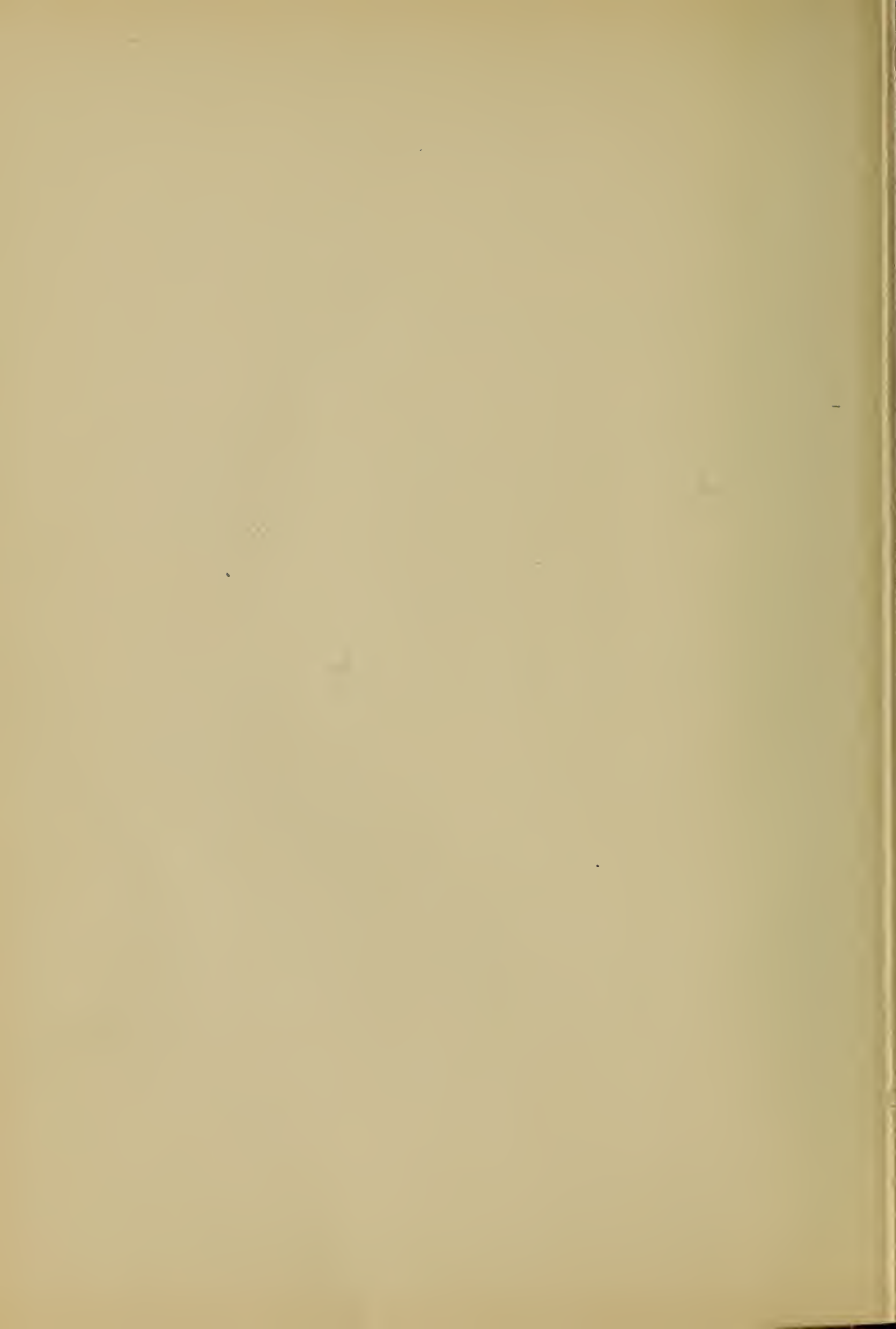
Jean's red and dented, Phillip's eaten with rust.

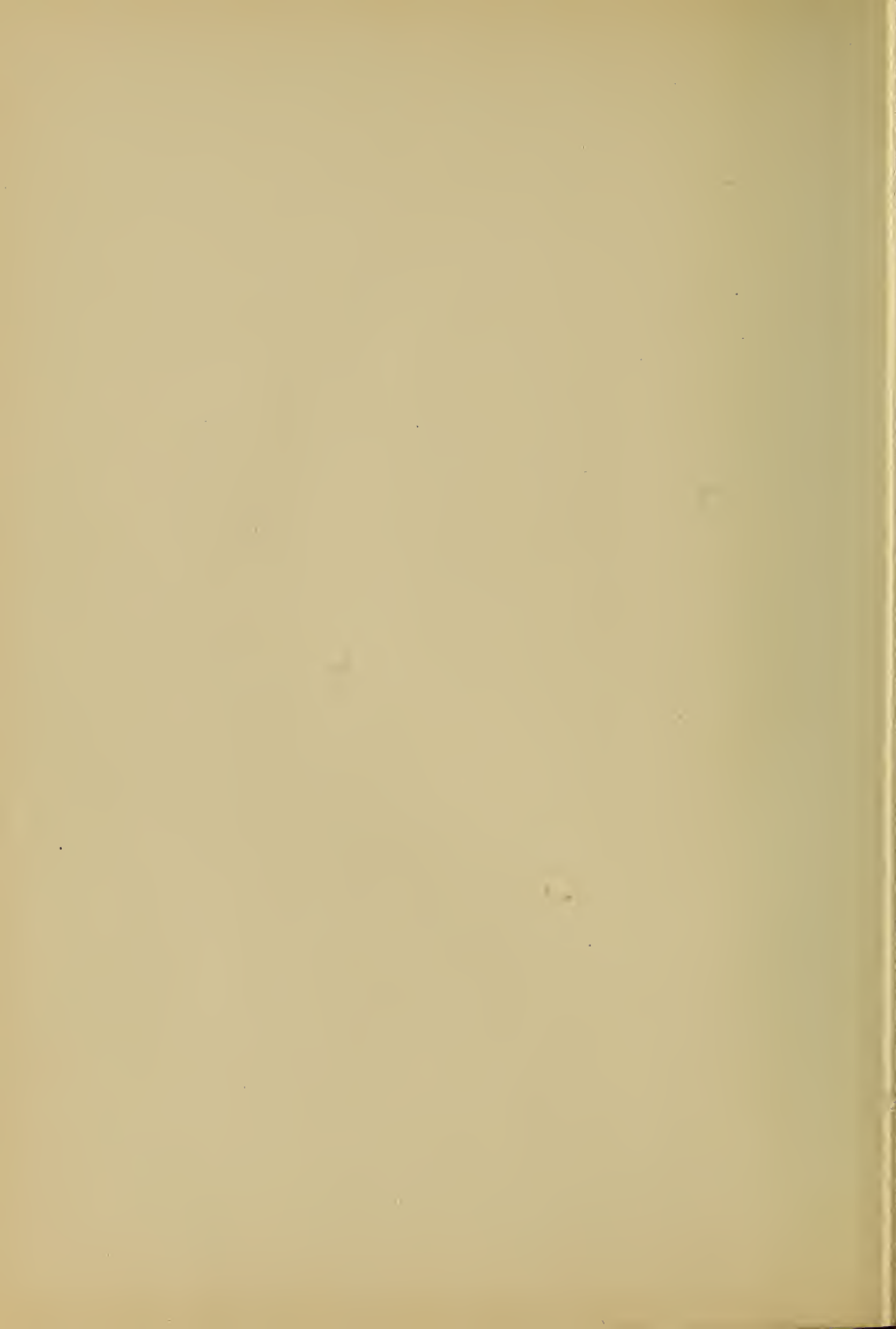
And the Crusader's sword, held by him who was mailed,

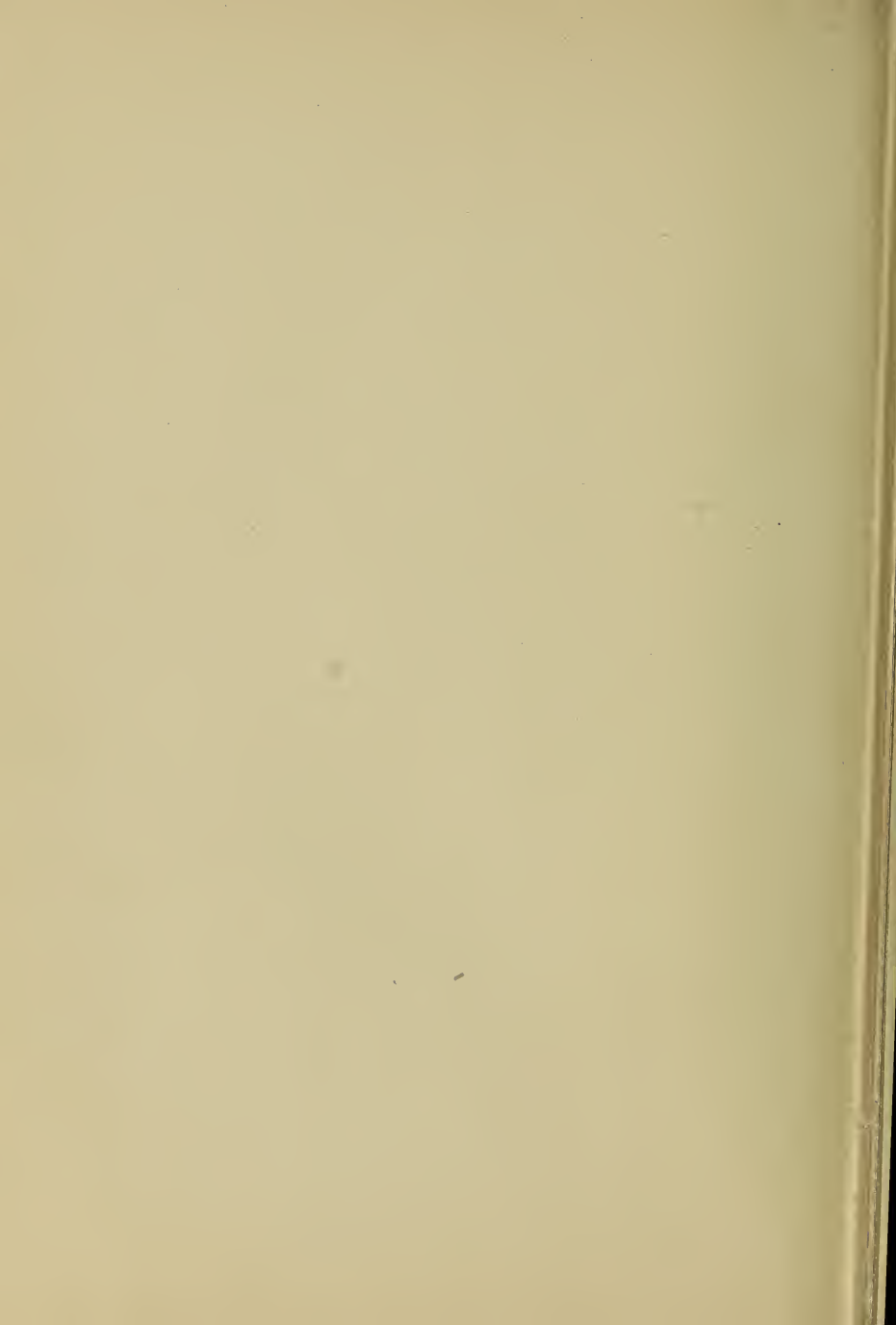
For the first time since forged
In its mission had failed,
Seemed to know that the hand which had guided the
blade,
Was the HAND that had TORN
Treaties carefully made.

Reposed now is Jean's soul in his God's starry world,
By one word, had been kept from to Hell being hurled,
And Phillip, who'd bravely tried his father to save,
Was in turn saved by Jean from an untimely grave.
No free agent was Jean when he mortgaged his soul,
Over that to him given, then had he no control.
But God, who rules all, had made the decree
That in this, Satan's power would limited be.
Though at times he aspires to absolute reign,
To his Master Supreme must a servant remain.
The mind war-deranged, God had fully restored,
So that Jean, if repentant, might speak The Great Word.
Recorded not against him things in ignorance done,
Expects not that of Man found in Angels alone.
Not for Him to destroy what Himself had created,
Opened He wide the door to the pilgrim belated.
In the Book were the names, in letters of gold
Of those who had strayed, but returned to the fold,
The Recording Angel had inscribed with his pen
The words "Jean Rivard, unlike other men."

The End









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